

Exodus Poems

Exodus Poems

By Doug Tanoury



FUNKY DOG PUBLISHING



Exodus Poems

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DETROIT, MICHIGAN USA



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Moses, Henry Holiday window, St. Paul's Church, Richmond, Virginia

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Exodus Poems

The Moses Soliloquy

And it began in the wilderness
With a voice calling out to me in the night
Calling me by name from a bramble
For that is all that grows there
It was as if it was consumed in flame
For it was lighting the darkness

And I have come to know the voice
As the Lord I Am who charged me
And laid this mission on me
To lead the tribes of his people Israel
But I was afraid and told him so
To let him find another but he would not

I am changed somehow by this task
I no longer am the man I once was
But somehow I am uplifted
By the tasks the Lord has asked
As if I have climbed a lofty mountain
And have left the normal world

I am transformed by what I do
And no longer watch the flocks
In the night and no longer do
The bidding of Pharaoh and his court and
For all the wonders the Lord has done
This change is the most miraculous

For what I Am has asked I have done
When he said extend your hand
My hand was extended and
When he said raise your rod
It was raised and Pharaoh and his
Magicians were confounded

As I now am confounded by
The workings of my God
Who rains meat for our pots
And grows bread for our table
And pours water from the dry
Stone of the desert at my command.

Exodus Poems

August Rain

I remember an August once
When I could talk to him
But didn't and each word unspoken
Rested like a brick on the silence
That lay thick as a layer of mortar
And grew into hardness between us

These days I think of him
Mostly when rain falls in gray sheets
With a soft hiss as droplets
Paint the pavement with color
Of an overcast sky and collects
On the road in pools in brought to full boil

In summer storms with the
Sound of thunder on my skin
I recall in the air's smell and
The wind cool in my hair
An August once when rain fell
In mortar gray hardness on our silence

Exodus Poems

Molten Calf

This is the god of lawlessness
A god of wantonness
And animal appetites
It a god of body and hunger
Of longing and wanting

That is my comfort
In these wild places and my banner
And standard in the battles
For I have grown weary and restless
In the shadow of this mountain

A god of singing and drinking
Of eating and dancing
A god of lewdness and wild gestures
Of revelry and release
In this desert place

And awaken my heart to the
Worship of the whim and
The adoration of the urge
In a wasteland so barren
In a world empty of God

Exodus Poems

Lazy Geometry

Lying prone in the backyard hammock,
In the combined shadows of the maple and the ash
I study the invisible movement of the sun toward zenith
And the afternoon light that pushes back the shade,
And when the breeze blows, just so, in the trees
I occasionally feel the sunlight on my face,
Fulgurant and fleeting,
A brightness penetrating just for a moment
The sleepy darkness of closed eyelids.

I have observed for long hours,
The serrated edges of each maple leaf,
And the teardrop foliage of the ash,
The boughs and branches rising,
Like arms of the devout uplifted in worship
They reach to touch the soft circumference
Of a summer sky,
Found only in the lazy geometry
Of a July afternoon.

Exodus Poems

Blue & Purple & Scarlet Stuff

And I know this for I have seen the fabric
On the shoulders of kings and their young sons
Cut and stitched and fit and formed
Crafted by the fingers of old women
With poor eyes that must hold the garment
To their noses to see their work

It is the colors of indigo and lapis
Topaz and garnet for I have seen the fabric
In the tunics of Phoenician princes
And in the capes of the captains of the Hittite hoards
The blues of royal hue in linen finely woven
Entwined and twisted

And in the embroidered pomegranates
That rest ripe on the hems of the garments
Of Aaron and his priests as they tend the Arc
Just after sunset under a sky that covers the desert
Like a cloak made with blue and purple
And scarlet stuff

Exodus Poems

The Tomb of Queen Amonherkhepsef

The darkness, I have found,
Comes in regular cycles
Like the inundations of the Nile
That floods the land of Egypt,
And bring a certain richness in their wake
That assures abundant harvests.

Yes, every seven years it comes,
Like the Locust that blacken the sky and
Devour everything that grows,
Both the green and the golden,
The wheat in the fields and the
Grain in the barns.

So bring me the last scribe who knows
The picture writing of the past,
To scribble out my history
In a stiff script of hieroglyphs,
A tale of timeless loss and the tedium
Of endless death and rebirth.

Wrap me tightly in these words,
Paint my lips, stylize my eyes
With charcoal lines, and brush brown irises
On closed eyelids
So I may remain awake forever
In the hereafter.

Dress me in fine linens like a bride
To meet Anubis,
The dog-faced god of death
And let the years pass like shifting sands
I will wait like Isis for Osiris, in a tomb
Until darkness becomes light.

Exodus Poems

Autumn In August

The unthinkable came to me
One night,
I felt her gone as a dream vanishes
Upon rising and gathers up its memory
In its wake.
Her touch is summer wind
In Autumn trees,
A passing out of season,
Like leaves in August
Turning brown and crimson
And dropping off
On to still green lawns.
A thing out of step,
An order confused,
A long pattern of seasons
Broken and gone.

*"She is not dead. . .
But only sleeping."*

I say out loud ,
Certain that
Autumn cannot arrive in August,
As I make loud radio static
And breakers on the beach
By walking alone through dead leaves
That bury the grass gone dormant
In days of dark clouds
That sit on the horizon
Like cats on a window sill
In the zenith of twilight.

Exodus Poems

A Slaves Life

They say go and I go
They say do this and I do it
They say gather and I gather
They say sow and I sow
For I am but a common slave and
They a cruel and capricious master

Who cares nothing if I live or die
For my daughters are like sheep and goats
And my sons like camels and oxen
All my children in the fields
Are bent by this burden
And bear the rod of the taskmaster

And at night by the fires
Amid the smoke from the smoldering pots
I pray to the Lord who is my freedom
And my deliverance
Whose reach is greater than the Nile
And whose bounty flows more freely

Exodus Poems

Poem For My Father

My father was the simple man,
Who wanted things to fit his plan.
Not highly lettered this I know,
He never wrote a word although
He held strong views on many things
That dealt with cabbages and kings.

You see, my father felt that all good verse
In rhyme and meter was immersed,
That poems be written and constructed
With long tradition unobstructed,
And built with blocks called foot or feet
With meter pounding out its beat.

And so he wanted poems to rhyme
With meter locked in perfect time,
And all my verse not to his taste
Was ridiculed right to my face,
And they were set aside unread
Like much between us left unsaid.

And so this poem so long in making
With all the rules it is now breaking,
The lines have taken years to craft,
A life long journey toward final draft,
And all the words now come so free
And sing in tethered melody.

So Father here's a poem you'd read,
One penned by your poetic seed.
It winks, it giggles and it grins.
It two steps, tangos and it spins,
And as every word now tows the meter,
I hope rhyme wiggles past St. Peter.

Exodus Poems

August Again

After long months of draught
And endless days of dryness
In these last days of summer
The sound of rainfall
Fills the air like radio static

And I study all the small details of storms
Their going and their coming
Their foreshadowing smell
The telltale blustering of wind
That blows in strong gusts

And I think it is the crack of lightning
The flash of thunder and the dull
Graininess that fills the atmosphere
And fades the landscape that somehow
Causes me to recall

An August once when all the elements
Of storm assailed me and thunder shook me
Lightning struck me and wind whipped
And rain beat against my face
And a long dry season ended

Exodus Poems

Burnt Offering

And it is with great haste
I come to her from the altar
Fresh from the sacrifice of atonement
Still in priestly robes
Splattered with ram's blood
My face smudged with ashes

When my robes fall away
I wear only the smell of olive oil
And incense before her and
She wears only a perfume
As our scents mingle and our
Fragrances intertwine

And our clothes left lying
In heaps on the floor
Are the skins shed by serpents
And the discarded shells of insects
That are cast off when
They take on new forms

Exodus Poems

Ode To Feet

I have seen poetic feet so perfect,
The very smallest units
Of patterned stress,
Soft idioms of Iambic
And drum beats of Anapestic,
That march across the carpet
In measured meter toward full-length mirrors.

I am the bard of bare soles
And naked ankles,
Of fallen arches and
Swollen heels,
Of toenails
Pedicured and painted,
That catch the light
Like so many cut sapphires,
All arranged
In descending order of size.

I have crafted couplets in Trochaic,
And started the heartbeat of lines in Spondaic,
For I am the poet of feet,
Perfect and imperfect,
Poetic
And otherwise,
Of bunions, bumps and bent toes,
Carried within or laid upon
A pump, mule, sandal or thong.

Exodus Poems

Cherubim Skillfully Worked

And it is the artisans and craftsmen that fashion the
Arc and the altar and all the linens of the tent of meeting
And the finely woven vestments of Aaron and his priests
Those that work with precious stones and metals
Sculpt and shape two Cherubim that looking toward each other
With faces like the sunrise on the sea and wings spread wide
And sheltering forming a canopy over the arc of testimony

And it is art that gives glory to God and the craftsman's
Hand and the artisan eye that honor Him for these
Are the works and the builders of his dwelling
Among His people Israel and as priests chant prayers
And prophets recite the law and the craftsmen shape
It is the poet's song that rises
Like a mist on the mountain in the morning
Their voices raised aloft on the melody of lute and lyre

Exodus Poems

Bad Weather

Whenever I saw him
I felt the cold
A kind of deep chill
That passed through me
Numbing my insides
And the ice that formed
On the outer edges of my words
Was skin tingling
In the same way
His kisses were snowflakes
Melting on my cheeks

I would always wish him gone
Just as I would hope
For winter's passing
And long for a trace of color
In the pencil sketch landscape
That is February
And now that he is
A season past
There is mildness in the air
And a stirring in the earth
Of things ready to grow

Exodus Poems

Precipitation

In these early days of winter
When drizzle floats weightless
And hangs frozen in the air
The wind in my ears
Whispering doubt
And the damp against my face
Frozen fear
The smudged grayness of sky
Deepening suspicion
That storms recrimination in the loud percussion
Of hail hitting the awning
And the downpour of rain against the asphalt
As I stand unspeaking and exposed
In a muteness like snowfall that
Drifts peacefully in quiet of whiteness

Her words frozen rain and falling hail
And me silent like a snowy night

Exodus Poems

My Father Dying

In the gulls cry I can remember
My father's voice and recall his smell
In the coolness of air drifting off

The lake that lay translucent green
Like the jade backs of crayfish
Its surface still and the only motion

A black-hulled lake freighter that
Travels the horizon like a body being
Wheeled down a hall on a gurney

The glint of sunlight that stretches
Across the surface is the silver tails
Of minnows swimming in schools

And the glassiness of his eyes as he
Falls into a stillness where unmoving
He becomes without wind or waves

The lake where mahogany earthworms
And ebony leeches are bait
For stained-glass bluegills

Exodus Poems

Up on Sinai

And I have answered His call
Been His prophet and been His slave
His will has been my will
And my mouth a holy tabernacle
For His words

Upon the mountain top
Beyond the thunder and lightning
Above the flames and smoke
God speaks to me in a low whisper
Carried on the slightest breeze

His voice is soft like the
Sound of waves on the Nile at night
And His words hushed like the flutter
Of dove's wings and as quiet as raindrops
Striking the surface of the sea

And I am brought high on Sinai
Upon the mountain top
To hear the Lord speak
With the low notes of music
From a lute and lyre

Exodus Poems

A Quiet Time

And I would say that in my silence
I am like the lake that I have often seen
At sunrise on a summer morning
A surface smooth and finely polished
An inlay of lapis and topaz
Turquoise and jade
Stretching out under an opal sky

Still as quartz and quiet as crystal
In the first yellow light
That floods over the horizon
Unmoved and undisturbed
Until my own breath
Like the wind on the water
Becomes too faint to hear

Exodus Poems

My Words

And in days from now
If this is read
With the eyes
Of another age

The form like fashion
Will be changed and
I will speak oddly
Out of style

My words breathless
And cold until
They are mouthed
And lips move

Every syllable
Becomes my heartbeat
Every pause my breath
That rises from

The wheezing bellow
Of my lungs and whistles
Up the chimney
Of my throat

On mouth and tongue
Through teeth and lips
To air to ears
To life once again

Exodus Poems

Favor In My Sight

They say that Moses found such favor
That God knew him by name and when they met
It was face to face and when they talked
It was like as two friends

He talked often of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob
As if every word spoken between them were craven in stone
And He remembered His promises
As if they were made just today

And I have often wondered
That if I like Moses met the Lord what I would say
But I have come to reflect much more now
On what words He might speak to me

Would He recall His talks with Moses
And remember the face of Pharaoh or experience them
As if in present time for tense has no meaning
For that which stands outside of time

For He Led the twelve tribes of Israel
Through the wilderness moments ago
And in the tent of meeting He speaks
To Moses at this moment

And now too God is parting the curtains
Of blue and purple and scarlet stuff to watch the sun setting
Beyond the mountain and both He and Moses
Marvel at a desert sunset

And I know too that if I met the Lord
Like Moses I would hang on His every word
As if they were raindrops in the desert
And I would whisper only one thing to him

remember me

Exodus Poems

A Time Once

There was a time once long ago
In what seems another life now
Where I travel back to in time
To the pillared threshold
Separating the front room
From the living room
An entrance
To everything that I loved
And nearly loved

As if the classic columns
And gothic woodwork
The precision product of
A carpenter's craft
Is not also
The gateway to my past
To days already lived
And nearly lived

Through dim rooms in memory
Where furniture is tattered and worn
And each armrest is marked
By the black spottiness of cigarette burns
I walk still through a Greek revival
Entranceway
To disappointments felt
And nearly felt

Near half closed Venetian blinds
That let in slanted blue light
Of twilight from the west
That shines on me still
The basis for color
And vision
For all that I see
And nearly see

Exodus Poems

Last Will & Testament

I have often said that
Old poets
Never die
They simply lose their voices
They get quiet
Fall into silence
Forget and are forgotten
And I know that I am on my way
Toward the great wordless

I see death and it is
The stark white page
The eternal pause
A period
And a blankness
An eternal
Search that stretches from
The back of your mind
To the tip of your tongue
For a word
That is never found

I am moving
In ever so certain steps
To my quiet time
Like the hush
On summer evenings
As I lay in the backyard hammock
Still and unmoving
As a figure carved in the cover
Of a sarcophagus
I see the signs
And read the foreshadowing

Yes old poets never pass away
They just somehow lose their vision
My eyes are going bad and
I can no longer see to write
I fancy myself
Like Homer
A sightless poet

Exodus Poems

I am blind as Milton
And one day soon
The only way I'll scribe
A line of verse will
Be to give dictation
To my children
Who will grimace
And make faces
That I cannot see

As my senses leave me
And my faculties flee
And all the muse
Take flight at once
Hear this from me now
That those the gods
Would destroy
They first make mute
Then take their sight
So I bequeath to you
All pretty phrases
To you all sunshine similes
To you the moonlit metaphors
I give you
All lightness and alliteration
I will you words
I leave you voice unending

Exodus Poems

The Pharaoh of My Past

I was enslaved
In the Egypt of you
By one whose heart
Was hard like a brick
And whose will was my burden

And how I have come
To be free is a story of a journey
Through a desert
Across a sea
And up the tallest mountain

I was your slave
And a victim of a will so harsh
It would not bend before
The voice of God
Until He took your son

So this song celebrates
And these words now sing
To Pharos's dead son
Who bought my freedom
And freed me from the Egypt of you

Exodus Poems

At The Lake

At the lake,
These last days in June
Are like living inside of an opal,
For there is a golden fire
In the sunlight,
A strobe-like flash
Reflected on each wave,
A cool lushness in the trees
Growing slowly toward full foliage,
And there is a certain point
Way out the channel, where the freighters steam,
Where a thin band of milky white atmosphere
Separates the pale blue of sky
From the deep blue lake,
Out where the red beacon on the lighthouse
Seems to regulate the meeting of air and water
And marks that misty point where earth ends
And heaven begins.

Exodus Poems

Venus Rising

I have seen a vision of Venus
Standing statue-like on the escalator
And rising as if on the waves,
Wearing a summer garment of many colors,
A pagan goddess walking amid
The merchandise in the temple of commerce,
As a chorus sings and instrument strums
From invisible speakers, the melodies
Seeming to emanate from the very air,
And I am breathless before an image
Botticelli would paint,
Of fresco smiles over wet plaster teeth,
And I understand now the judgment of Paris
Was a no-win dilemma, an Olympian gottya
So inescapable and impossible.
This is the fickle goddess of bargain days,
The patron of retail sales that I kneel before
In abject genuflection.
Awaken you Muse!
Arise you Greek Poets!
Rouse yourselves Athenian Playwrights!
For I have seen Aphrodite walking
Up the marble temple steps
Wearing only one leather sandal.

Exodus Poems

The Finger Of God

And the two tablets
Scribed with the law and
Written by the finger of God
His word captured in the stone
Were cast down and broken
At the mountain's base

And I am moved
By a message from God
Shattered and in pieces at our feet
Of covenants unkept and
Testaments unmet here
In the shadow of Sinai

And I have not seen God's face
Only his finger as he wrote
His presence fire on the mountain
A flickering and a flame
That melts an icy heart
In the company of the Lord

Exodus Poems

The Body Digital

I bring you the body digital
Where networks of nerves are fiber optic strands
Wound round the conduit of bone and
Through the connectors of heart
That beats a pulse to push the hexadecimals
Through veins of micro-circuits
Into the far reaches of this domain
Where packets shoot like falling stars
On the hot and sticky nights of August
Lost beyond the far horizons
Where throats are cleared with the bass
And treble of modems making connection

Exodus Poems

Breath

In the dim lit alchemy of morning
I have come to stand near the counter
In the quiet of a house asleep
And listen to the drip coffee maker
That resembles apothecary apparatus
As it makes the sounds of labored respiration
A loud sigh
A deep inhale
A long and lingering exhale
And it called to mind
My father breathing
Before he died

The rasping movement of air
Deep in the throat
A wheezing in the air passage
That at times
Borders on a low whisper
And sometimes a shrill whistle
And I see whiteness of the coffee maker
And the glass that catches the first
Weak light of sunrise
All the medical apparatus
That steams and heats and

Speaks with the last words
My father uttered
That was more a bubbling of liquid
And movement of air
Than the words of the well
That are formed by lips
And shaped by tongue
This to you now
Is my lesson in voice
Which at times becomes
The same as breath

Exodus Poems

Signs In August

As the mornings grow cooler in later August
I notice flowers grow more vivid
Each blossom wears a brighter shade
Each bud promises a more vibrant hue
And leaves grow a lush green

In these evenings of late summer
The crickets seem to call louder
In a meter more pronounced
And becomes to me as I listen now
The very heartbeat of night

And in these signs I see
The season's end foreshadowed
And I reflect on its last days
As rain falls in the afternoon and
Ends in white bursts across the pavement

Making leave and blossom twitch and tremble
As if animated the flowers awaken
From dreaming colors of summer mornings
And trees listen and sway silently to songs
That fill an August night

And I too am now awake
And wear a new more full awareness
Of the signs and signals of a season passing
And the significance of small and tiny symbols
Like a raindrop glistening
On a cricket's charcoal back

Exodus Poems

Pathetique

I remember innocence
In what seems another life
When I was no one
And had nothing but music
That would escape through
My opened bedroom window without a screen

To be recaptured only now
In melody slow
Tunes thoughtful
The memory notes of a sonata
Rising now on the heated air
Of a summer night

It remains a collection of lost lyrics
A half-forgotten score
That plays on occasion in the
Acoustical perfection of
Of a bedroom painted blue with an opened
Window that has no screen

Exodus Poems

The Red Sea Between Us

And something has allowed me
To get from there to here
Some miracle of passage
Some magic that has parted the sea
Between us and carved a dry path
From among the waves and formed
A wall of water on my right
And on my left

And the power of Pharaoh behind me
Is washed away and I Am has delivered me
On this distant shore
My old life fades from memory
Like a dream that is only half-remembered
And seems unreal and somehow
Unattached from me as if I were born anew
This very moment

Exodus Poems

About Doug Tanoury



Doug Tanoury is primarily a poet of the Internet with the majority of his work never leaving electronic form. His verse can be read at electronic magazines and journals across the world. Collections of poetry by Doug Tanoury can be found at Funky Dog Publishing <http://www.funkydogpublishing.com> and Athens Avenue <http://mywebpages.comcast.net/dtanoury1/Athens/index.htm>

This and other ebook collections of poetry by Doug Tanoury can be read and downloaded at: <http://home.comcast.net/~dtanoury1/Tanoury.html>

Doug grew up in Detroit, Michigan and still lives in the area.

Doug Tanoury credits his 7th grade poetry anthology from Sister Debra's English class, *Reflections On A Gift Of Watermelon Pickle And Other Modern Verse*, (Stephen Dunning, Edward Lueders and Hugh Smith, (c) 1966 by Scott Foresman & Company) as exerting the greatest influence on his work. He still keeps a copy of it at his writing desk.